

Going For The Gold...

You can hardly turn on the radio or fire up a computer on the internet these days without hearing or viewing an advertisement about investing in gold. Some even claim you can make a pretty penny smelting grandma's old knick-knacks and jewelry. The price of gold seems to be inversely proportional to the current economy and some see the precious metal as one of the true safe investments out there. I am certainly no investment genius (I once bought a few shares of a little energy company named Enron), but gold does have a few advantages when it comes to your teeth. It certainly doesn't look pretty in the front, but gold is strong in the back. Just don't plan on retiring by selling those old worn out crowns.

There is hardly enough space in this newspaper to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various materials we dentists can use to fix teeth. Gold, porcelain, amalgam (silver-mercury), and composite resin (plastic) are all useful materials to fix certain teeth in certain situations. Porcelain looks the most like teeth. Composite can be a quick, esthetic fix. There is constant research and constant evolution of what material works best when, how, and where. For the sake of brevity, today let us discuss gold in replacing lost tooth structure.

Strength – Gold restorations do not chip, crack, or peel off of teeth. I have yet to see a gold crown break. Gold is extremely strong and durable. If you want the very longest lasting fix to a tooth, gold is usually a great choice.

Biocompatibility – In general, your body likes gold. We rarely see inflamed gums around the purest gold restorations. That is, if they are kept clean and flossed regularly.

Conservation – In general, the preparation or shaving down of the teeth can be more conservative if gold is to be used, as opposed to porcelain. In other words, less of your tooth is removed to make room for a gold crown versus a tooth colored crown.

There are several drawbacks to using gold to replace tooth structure in your mouth. Gold tends to be a bit sensitive, as it transmits hot and cold through your tooth rather quickly. This usually goes away in a few weeks to a few months. Cost is also an issue. Right now there is a much higher cost of gold crowns due to the high cost of the metal. Finally, esthetics is an issue. Few patients want to see a gold tooth in their mouth when a tooth colored crown is a viable option. Porcelain is beautiful and gold is sometimes hard to hide.

When it comes to your teeth, you always have options. Ask your dentist if you cannot decide what is right for you.

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Please send comments to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.